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## **New law helps protect Great Lakes waters**

**LANSING** – Landmark legislation that would allow states to work together to prevent the further invasion of aquatic nuisance species in the Great Lakes was signed into law this week, announced Sen. Laura Toy, cosponsor of the bill.

“I am proud to see this legislation become law,” said Toy, R-Livonia. “Michigan and the Great Lakes are virtually synonymous, so it only makes sense that we take the lead on addressing ballast water and the impact it has on our precious Great Lakes.”

Senate Bill 332, now Public Act 33, authorizes the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to enter into an agreement with other Great Lakes basin states to create the Great Lakes Aquatic Nuisance Coalition. The coalition will be charged with eliminating this damaging form of biological pollution in the Great Lakes. The legislation also establishes a new regulatory process for guarding against discharges of ballast water from ocean going vessels.

There are currently 162 aquatic nuisance species in the Great Lakes, including the sea lamprey, zebra mussel, spiny water flea and Eurasian ruffe.

Aquatic nuisance species are commonly introduced to the Great Lakes through ballast water discharge from ocean-going vessels. Although laws are in place to prevent ballast water dumping, certain exemptions in the federal Clean Water Act are still allowing this harmful practice to continue. Because of the exemption, more biological pollution is being allowed in the Great Lakes.

Toy has always been actively committed to protecting Michigan’s environment and precious natural resources. As a young woman, she started and ran the first environmental center in the city of Livonia, which included recycling, reusing, and educational components. She also established the Ecology Commission in the city of Livonia, the first in the state, in the early 1970s.